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GOVERNOR RUSSELL AND HIS CANVASS OF CAPE COD.

NOVEMBER 7TH, 1892.

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Long & W. H. Brown



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Mr. S. C. G.

TO HENRY C. THACHER AND
THOMAS C. THACHER.

NOBIS HAEC OTIA.

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PREFACE.

THIS sketch of a notable event, of which the writer was a fortunate eye-witness, was originally prepared for publication immediately after the last election, but subsequently withheld, that the substance of it might be related at a dinner given by Mr. Henry Villard to President-elect Cleveland, at Sherry's, New York, November 17th, 1892. This honorable delay, however, closed the columns in which the writer had hoped to publish his article—for it was no longer “news,” nor had it yet become history. Three months have now passed since the elections and the excitement attending them has entirely abated; but friends, in whose judgment the writer has every confidence, are still urging him to put his sketch in a form for permanent preservation, and he now does so, not only in deference to their advice, but because he believes the remarkable achievement which he has narrated belongs to and will take its place in our political annals; and because, so far as he knows, although he writes as a frank (and, he hopes, a

fair) partisan, this is the only account of it extant which was leisurely written, from full notes made at the time, with no view to coloring or obscuring the facts, and with no compulsion on the writer to subordinate the pleasing simplicity of the scenes through which he was passing to the demands of a "breezy" or "humorous" newspaper narrative.

L. McK. G.

LLEWELLYN PARK,
ORANGE, NEW JERSEY,
February 9th, 1893.

Lloyd McKim Garrison.





AMONG THE most remarkable incidents of the remarkable campaign just ended, if not of all American political campaigning, was Governor Russell's invasion, the day before election, of the Republican fastnesses of Cape Cod. It was a conception so original that until (like the "Madman" Sherman's March to the Sea) accomplishment had justified it as a piece of the boldest and wisest strategy, friends looked upon it as a mere venture, and the opposition, as rank folly.

The credit for its suggestion lies with Henry C. Thacher, candidate for Congress for the Thirteenth Massachusetts District, and a life-long resident of the Cape; his son, who is conspicuously identified with the young Democrats of the State; and George T. McLaughlin of Sandwich, an old and widely-known Democrat in a district where, for a generation, Democrats had been almost as scarce as the original Pequots. These gentlemen rightly calculated the amount of local enthusiasm which a visit from the Governor of the Commonwealth would arouse throughout a great region which only one Governor in years (and he, the eccentric Butler) had deigned to visit officially, and whose local pride had been hurt, because during the

same period no county fair or cattle show had seemed too insignificant to summon the Chief Magistrate to the extremest limits of the Commonwealth in any other quarter; and they shrewdly guessed at the profit to be gained by proselyting among political heathen, who had never even heard the preachers of the new faith, and whose medicine men, believing their conversion impossible, had long since ceased to shake the rattle before them. The Governor had nothing to gain by campaigning elsewhere through the State, where he was everywhere familiarly known; but here was a population, neglected by its own political leaders, where the change of *one opinion* meant a change of *two votes*; and he determined to address himself to bringing about such a change.

The Republicans either affected to find such a mission a huge jest, or to be shocked at the "effrontery" of such an "indecent bid" for votes; but the Governor, with quick audacity, turned this weapon against them by specifically avowing in every speech he made—what was perfectly obvious—that he *did* come on a vote-seeking tour and not on an official visit; that it was the duty of a Governor who was a candidate for re-election to submit his administration to the people of the Commonwealth to be judged; and that if he had no access to any part of the people through the ordinary mediums of communication, to come before them personally and ask for a fair hearing.

As this hearing before the people of Cape Cod, if had at all, could only be had by severally visiting a number of small towns, far apart and little inter-related,

the novel plan was suggested by the Messrs. Thacher of a series of open-air addresses from the platform of a car, before audiences to be summoned (on forty-eight hours' notice by placard) to the local depots along the line of the Old Colony Railroad, at hours varying from early morning till late afternoon.

The plans were finally ratified on Friday, November 4th. On Saturday, the 5th, placards announcing the coming visit were spread broadcast through the Cape, in all the towns within fifteen miles of the line of the route; and late in the afternoon of November 6th, Sunday, the special train in which the Governor was to travel bore his party from Boston, and with but one or two stops reached Provincetown, at the extreme end of the Cape, about half-past ten at night.

There were two cars, a big parlor car and a smoker, which, as well as the engine, were profusely decked with bunting. With a clear track, they flew past the villages where the ordinary train on the Old Colony lingers regretfully, but not so fast but what its party could see groups about the various stations, waiting in the darkness for a glimpse of the Governor, or, at least, of the official coach, and coming up when the train stopped to rub the wet from the car windows, that they might look inside; and could enjoy the burst of red fire with which some zealous friends at Eastham beautified hill and hollow.

The company in the train was a brilliant and lively one. Beside the composed (almost impassive) Governor sat Mr. Carroll, the young candidate for Lieutenant-Governor, and Mr. Hamlin, younger still in

looks and years, candidate for Secretary of State, both fighting hopeless fights with all their physical and mental power, the former almost ill from nervousness and fatigue, but the latter quite undisturbed. There was the powerful, quizzical face of Patrick A. Collins, and Congressman Joe O'Neill's irresistible comedian's mask; Mayor Matthews, sombre and tired out by the duties of office and the management of two congressional campaigns; the massive, determined physiognomy of candidate Thacher; Robert Burnett, Col. Harry Russell, the Governor's younger brother; Lee Meriwether, the traveller and economist; Thomas C. Thacher, Commissioner Curran of Boston, and several others, not to speak of reporters from all the Boston papers, hostile and friendly.

For those who only vaguely remember the map of Cape Cod, it might be said that it resembles a human arm bent up at the elbow and (in lieu of a hand) terminating in a hook, like Captain Cuttle's, formed by a long strip of low land, which curves out and away into Massachusetts Bay from the piled up sand-dunes that end the Cape. Within its shelter is a large but shallow harbor, along whose inner margin, bent about it crescent-wise, lies Provincetown, since old Marblehead was burned, the most picturesque seaboard town in Massachusetts.

Its houses are venerable of outline, but like all the wooden houses of the Cape, brightly painted, and most of them painted white; the streets have but a single sidewalk each, a broad wooden one, which runs along beside one row of houses. Close behind the town,

and curving with the curve of the harbor, lies a huge rampart of sand—a dune overgrown with weeds and tough grass, which rises to a height of nearly a hundred feet sheer out of level ground. On its top once stood the town hall, a fine building, which was unluckily burned down a short while ago; but it is still as much the city's centre as Beacon Hill is Boston's; and wherever one looks down one of the short cross-streets he sees them end against its abrupt rise, as the lower town streets in old Heidelberg, against the Schlossberg. From its sandy summit he beholds spread beneath him on the one side an ellipse of shingled roofs, broken here and there by an airy white belfry, and, on the other, a volcanic upheaval of yellow sand-hills (between which are sedgy ponds and beyond which is the limitless blue sea) fairly aglow, under the brilliant sky of a November day, with the late-changing color of the low bushes whose bronzes and purples give a peacock lustre to the prevailing green of the scrub against which they are contrasted.

Provincetown's modern town hall is a commodious one; it would hold a thousand people with ease, and twelve hundred comfortably. The meeting that was to take place there on Monday morning, November the 7th, had been advertised scarcely two days, and that merely by a few placards; but further advertising could have done no more, even if the town crier, who still survives, had been pressed into service to make the rounds with his bell. There was a band, however, a very good local band, which played for some time in front of the hotel early Monday morning, and subse-

quently escorted the Governor's party through crowded streets to the hall. It was then a little before eight o'clock, but the streets were alive; and when the local chairman tremulously called the meeting to order a few minutes after eight o'clock, the hall was crowded to the limit of its capacity. There was never, perhaps, a political meeting got together in time of peace under such singular conditions; for here was assembled, at breakfast time, what was virtually a town's whole people, who had come to hear political speeches from the advocate of a party which represented about one-seventh of its total poll! "Why, sir," said Mr. Collins to the Governor, "*this* is a grander compliment than a re-election!"

The audience was well dressed, very decorous, and extremely attentive, but the Democratic element was hardly represented beyond the front benches, and although Mr. Russell was received upon his introduction with unanimous applause, the audience, after having made this demonstration of respect, disposed itself to be critical.

The Governor was more than equal to the emergency and displayed all those qualities which have made him, if not a great orator, the most persuasive and captivating of advocates. He has neither a commanding physique nor an arresting presence, nor great passion, nor invective, nor a soaring imagination; but the shrewd homeliness and sweet temper of his Lincolnian face, and his agreeable voice and easy gesture serve, perhaps, even better to prepossess the listener in his favor; and no one surpasses him in clearness of

statement, in aptness of illustration, in simplicity of argument, in the power of making himself understood, or can equal him in convincing an audience of the speaker's absolute fairness and candor. So much for the potency of his mere appearance and method; but manner and method would go for naught were it not for the intellectual poise (in which caution is mingled with wise audacity) which makes William E. Russell such a formidable antagonist.

The Governor had but twenty minutes at Provincetown, but he managed to condense into that time a wonderfully vigorous attack on the Republican party, State and National. As to State issues, he began by admitting frankly and simply that he came to Provincetown seeking votes, and ready and anxious to account to the people for his exercise of the trust they had bestowed on him. He narrated his efforts and his failure to prevail upon Mr. Haile to meet him "man fashion" on the platform and criticise the administration, and avow where he was standing on the questions "with which," he said, "Mr. Haile will have to deal if he becomes Governor." He recounted his attempt to remove, for corruption in office, Police Commissioner Osborne of Boston who, it was singular to notice, was a live "issue" in a country town over a hundred miles away; and with a fine burst of irony he alluded to Osborne's present efforts "to elect Mr. Haile, a prohibitionist, by coercing the liquor dealers of Boston, and so, as they say, to redeem the Commonwealth." He spoke of the habitual unfairness of the Republicans in dealing with an administration which they proposed

to supplant, "without a word of responsible criticism," "by electing a candidate who dare say nothing, standing on a platform that means nothing." The coldness of the Governor's audience had vanished; and during the second half of his speech, when he made the most lucid exposition of the purpose and effect of the McKinley tariff that ten minutes would permit of (always keeping artfully in the foreground the deadly self-contradictions of his opponents), he was splendidly applauded, especially when he closed by naming the National and Congressional candidates.

Carroll and Collins had an excited audience, and made short and lively speeches that kept them bubbling with an enthusiasm which, considering their politics, was extraordinary. Then the meeting adjourned from the platform to the floor; and there the Governor, for fifteen minutes, shook hands with the city of Provincetown. Here, again, his simplicity of manner appeared most strikingly—dignified, yet cordial, and cordial without the least effusiveness. He was offered many babies to kiss. (It is a trifling thing; but though he declined to kiss any baby during the day, he offended no mother in refusing her). At nine o'clock the party were in the train, headed for Boston and under way, and during the next six hours their life was an alternation of short, swift runs and intense and exciting halts, each one amidst an audience a little bigger and a little more enthusiastic than the one before.

Just after leaving Provincetown, there was a momentary stop by the wayside, at the urgent request of five life-saving men in full dress uniform, who

wished to shake the Governor's hand, and later in the day there was an unscheduled stop for a large crowd of working-men at Tremont, but otherwise the long pre-arranged schedule was observed with literal exactness. The train ran in at a station and stopped; the speaking at once began; the hand-shaking was hurried through with; a whistle blew, at which everybody tumbled back into the cars; a second whistle set the train moving; and then the next station began to loom up in prospect.

At first the way lay between high dunes and rolling moors, purple at the bottom with cranberry bogs, covered with dun grass on their slopes and, in patches, brilliant with changing leaves. Sometimes the ocean was in sight, on the left—sometimes the bay, on the right—sometimes both were visible at once; and, for a long time, across the smooth blue water, could be seen the houses of Provincetown lying in a pearly crescent; and from the windows, novel apparitions—queer lateen sails—fat old windmills—long weirs and slender belfries—constantly charmed the unaccustomed eye.

After leaving Provincetown, the first few audiences were very small, the neighboring country being sparsely populated; but after leaving Truro they steadily grew again, till at Middleboro the voice could not reach to the limit of the crowd. At the first towns there was little but curiosity in the assembling of the people, unless their lack of responsiveness was altogether due to that New England sense of propriety which forbids that one should “laugh right out in meetin.” It is

probable, though, that their profoundly rooted Republicanism found little comfort in the questions the Governor was putting them from the platform.

These meetings, informal as they were—(a mere country crowd clustering over the platform of a small way-station and the bed of the railroad track)—were none the less impressive from the good behavior of the people and the innate courtesy of demeanor and self-respect that is inherent in all native American gatherings. When the time came when they might take the Governor of their State by the hand, they did so with evident shyness and equally evident gratification; but there was nowhere a trace either of familiarity or of false humility (even in the awestruck boys and girls that averted their faces as they passed him, lest the eye of Jupiter should shrivel them like Semele). Nor was the Governor's bearing unworthy of his constituents.

At many places there was some decoration—flags hung out—portraits of the Governor framed in colors, or placards of welcome. At Wellfleet, a schoolmistress led to the station her whole school, some twenty-five little girls, whom she had provided, each one, with a small American flag—probably at no little sacrifice to herself of time and money. At the same place, a little girl handed to the Governor a large bouquet of chrysanthemums (as “to one who loves the children,”) and at other stops there were more and still larger bouquets, till one heaped-up corner of the car gave it a theatrical air. “The Russell and Carroll Opera Troupe, limited,” somebody called it; “unlimited,” corrected another, who was nearer to the truth; for there seemed to be

no end to the huge bunches of these hardy exotics that were flung on the increasing heap after every halt. At one or two stops, notably West Barnstable and Sandwich, stands draped in colors had been erected by thoughtful local committees, for the convenience of the speakers; and at East Brewster the entire station was hidden in bunting and the platform spread with rugs for the honor of the Commonwealth. All these demonstrations of courtesy, like the red fire that greeted the train the preceding night and the assembling of these great crowds themselves, were purely spontaneous, planned at less than two days' notice, and were in many features quite non-partisan.

The Governor spoke from the rear platform of the last car, his left arm resting lightly on the brake, and his right hand serving for gesture. He wasted no time in preface; nor did he conceal the purpose of his visit or unduly flatter his auditors. Rarely speaking over ten minutes and usually only five, he was none the less under the compulsion of making to each audience a complete speech; and this feat of successful condensation was perhaps as remarkable as any he accomplished during the day. Between Provincetown and Sandwich his speeches varied but little in substance, though with the exception of a few happy phrases he rarely repeated the form of expression. State issues were the burden of his theme, and those he developed on the lines of his Provincetown speech, insisting that Republican failure to criticise his administration was an endorsement of it, and their candidate's failure to avow his opinions, a confession of unfitness. Yet with every

temptation to speak wholly for himself in a contest where he *might* win, but the national ticket certainly *could not*, he never failed to add a few weighty words for it and an eloquent tribute to the Congressional candidate, Mr. Thacher, "your honored and trusted friend and neighbor," and "that other neighbor," whose name always evoked enthusiasm, "whom accident made a native of New Jersey, and the practice of his profession a citizen of New York, but who is by his own preference a resident of Barnstable County—Grover Cleveland of Buzzard's Bay."

Where the crowd was a large one, Mr. Collins or Mr. Hamlin, and sometimes both, and once Mayor Matthews, and once Mr. Meriwether, added a few words to keep the enthusiasm at its first pitch. Mr. Collins's wit was quickly appreciated, especially in behalf of "his own candidacy," as he called it, which he "was surprised and sorry the Governor had forgotten to mention," because his was the first name on the ticket (as first elector at large); and Mr. Hamlin's fine enthusiasm and sonorous voice proved very contagious. ("The boy has the brains of the worrld," said one auditor as he concluded a brilliant peroration). Mr. Carroll was ill, unfortunately, and could not speak after leaving Provincetown—a real loss and disappointment to everybody.

So the trip wore on, the nervous tension and excitement increasing with each successive resumption of the attack before new and unflagging audiences, and the party on the train growing in proportion with the day; every now and then some one or two local celebrities

or enthusiasts joining to swell its roll. Provincetown lent it a half dozen, who journeyed as far as Brockton; and others came, tarried and disappeared, all along the way. One of these gentlemen said that among the seventy-five men in his employ (he was a large builder) forty had declared their intention to follow him in his abandonment of the Republican party, "and I think twenty-five of those will stick," said he; and half a dozen men, one a venerable Abolitionist, announced at as many different places, their individual conversions from life-long Republicanism.

The crowds during the last half of the journey were not only larger but more demonstrative than the morning's Republican gatherings. At Yarmouth, the Governor's good-natured rally of their Senator, John Simpkins, who was present, provoked a storm of laughter and applause, and at Tremont, Sandwich and, lastly, Middleboro, where the crowd overflowed all bounds, there was very great enthusiasm and excitement. At Sandwich, hand-shaking was abandoned as impracticable; at Middleboro, speaking was nearly as impossible; and there, in the endeavor to make himself heard above the noise of the crowd, the ill-advised explosion of crackers, and, worst of all, the puffing of a freight engine on the siding, the Governor's voice showed, for the first time, the strain upon it.

The last meeting of the day was a fitting climax; and if the gathering of twelve hundred people at eight o'clock in the morning to hear political speeches was a remarkable thing, the gathering at three in the afternoon, in a manufacturing town, of double that number,

mostly operatives, was a most impressive instance of the deep and abiding interest the economic question has aroused in our reading population; and this was what awaited the party at the Republican City of Brockton, where, at a day's notice, the opera house, second only in New England to the Boston Theatre in size, was filled with hands from the shoeshops and other factories, who had succeeded in getting there, nobody knew how. State issues were subordinated before this audience whom national issues were perplexing; and those were discussed at great length by all the speakers in the company, Mr. Collins being especially happy.

This impressive meeting ended the tour, although it nominally continued to Boston, where a small cart-load of flowers was taken, at the Governor's request, from the car to the Massachusetts General Hospital. He had accomplished the most singular political canvass on record, as severe a physical as it was an intellectual achievement. In less than eight hours he had travelled over a great province—seen face to face more of its people than any man ever saw in one day before—spoken to sixteen different assemblages, fourteen of which were in the open air, and shaken hands with an indefinite great number of people. Yet absolutely without self-regard, as without vanity over this succession of individual triumphs, he went that evening to his regular assignments, and spoke four times more in different suburbs about Boston, till his indomitable pluck could no longer control his physical repugnance to further effort.

The effort had not been in vain. Provincetown doubled its Democratic vote—Brockton showed great gains, and everywhere through the Cape little local accretions were indicated in the returns, till, out of his scant three thousand plurality, Mr. Russell could count some eight hundred hardly-earned votes as the reward for his day of trial, the ultimate results of which, wherever it has stimulated human question and reflection, cannot yet be measured by any scale.







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